

PRESS RELEASE



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PRELIMINARY FINDINGS ON THE ECONOMIC STATUS OF KENTUCKY WOMEN UNVEILED

The Governor's Task Force on the Economic Status of Kentucky's Women today unveiled its preliminary findings from a year-long effort to examine the challenges facing Kentucky women. Task Force co-chairs First Lady Judi Patton and former Governor Martha Layne Collins, along with Task Force members, presented the findings to the public at a press conference in the Capitol rotunda.

"I am very proud to have co-chaired this Task Force made up of so many outstanding Kentuckians. The work of hundreds of volunteers on this ground-breaking project will allow us to benchmark progress in Kentucky for years to come," said Mrs. Patton.

Based on the reports generated by volunteers from across the Commonwealth, the Task Force identified five broad areas affecting the economic status of Kentucky women. "For Kentuckians to achieve a standard of living at or above the national average by 2020, we must address the barriers facing 51 percent of our population, Kentucky's women. Addressing these crucial areas for women will improve the quality of life for ALL Kentuckians," said Governor Collins.

The five areas are as follows:

- Economic Sufficiency—Not all women have adequate opportunities to secure quality employment that will lead to self-sufficiency.
- Education— Too many Kentuckians, especially females, are undereducated. Although Kentucky has made improvements in its public schools and colleges, the resources of this educational system are underutilized.
- Equity—Discrimination persists in many Kentucky workplaces, schools, and all facets of society.

- Leadership—Women are drastically underrepresented in positions of power in both the public and private sectors.
- Well-being—For many women basic living concerns such as safety, housing, and health care take precedence over getting a better education or a higher-paying job.

The Task Force further noted that women working in state government still face challenges such as discrimination in the workplace and inconsistent application of employment rules and practices.

These five themes serve as the framework for the full report of the Task Force, which will include specific recommendations for improvement in these areas. The full report will be released at the first Summit on the Economic Status of Kentucky's Women to be held June 20-21, 2003 in Frankfort.

In 2000, the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) reported that Kentucky was the sixth-worst state for women—a ranking which prompted the Kentucky Commission on Women to hold Town Meetings across the Commonwealth. Following the Town Meetings, Governor Paul E. Patton appointed the Task Force on the Economic Status of Kentucky's Women on November 16, 2001. According to the 2002 rankings released just three weeks ago by the IWPR, Kentucky has now slipped to the third-worst state for women.

In October 2001, the Kentucky Commission on Women called for volunteers to serve on five issue committees reporting to the Task Force. Over the last year nearly 300 women and men from over 55 counties traveled monthly to Frankfort to examine obstacles to the economic progress of Kentucky women, identify solutions, and develop a plan of action. To date an estimated 51,000 volunteer hours have been invested in this nationally recognized project.

"The effort and dedication of the Task Force and work of the committee members have far exceeded our expectations," said KCW Executive Director Betsy Nowland-Curry. "The next vital step to the improvement of the economic status of all Kentuckians will be the Summit on the Economic Status of Kentucky's Women in June."

This Summit will provide a forum for the official announcement of the findings and recommendations of the Governor's Task Force on the Economic Status of Kentucky's Women. Citizens of the Commonwealth will come together to develop strategies for implementation of the recommendations.

A copy of the preliminary findings can be found at <http://women.state.ky.us/PrelimFindings.pdf>.

For more information on the upcoming Summit on the Economic Status of Kentucky's Women, please visit <http://women.state.ky.us>.

VIDEO AVAILABLE--To request video clips from the press conference, please call 502/564-6643.